

## near you – adults!

By Larry Van Guilder

Who said playing in the creek is just for kids? Certainly not the students at Powell Middle School, especially when it comes to teaching the older generation a thing or two about water quality.

Under the guidance of AmeriCorps volunteer Leah Lemoine, and Powell Middle School teachers Robert Lavoie and Tom Jursik, the students are preparing for an Adults in the Creek day Saturday, April 28. Using the knowledge they will acquire over the next few weeks, 10 students will become teachers, sharing what they have learned with 20 or more adults.

Lemoine, an LSU graduate with a degree in environmental engineering, is teaching the eighth graders the fundamentals of measuring stream health. The stream in question is Beaver Creek. The topics covered by the students include fish assessment, stream chemistry, land use impacts and “benthic macroinvertebrate assessment.”

If that last term is unfamiliar, you're not alone, but “benthics” are mostly the larval forms of insects found on creek bottoms. How many there are and of what type indicate a stream's health. (The type and number of fish in a stream also serves as a barometer of the water's condition.)

“Stream chemistry” training includes performing pH and dissolved oxygen analyses. Away from the classroom, the students will get a chance to put their laboratory skills to work on the actual creek water.

Powell Middle participated in Kids in the Creek in 2004. This year's event adds a twist that can involve any adult living in the Beaver Creek Watershed, an area stretching from Gibbs to Solway.

During last Wednesday's after-school classroom session, Cassie Cardwell and classmate Jordyn Wilson were intently classifying their “benthic specimens.”

“I think it's going to be fun,” Cassie said of the upcoming Adults in the Creek day. “Usually adults are the ones that teach us.”

Eric Welch held a similar opinion.

“I think it will be fun to actually teach them something,” he said, adding that he was learning a lot about “bugs” and testing water.

Emily Dunaway was helping Eric sort their specimen tray.

“I'm really excited about it,” Emily said. “We get to learn something about

the environment.”

As a group, the students were asked to name the most important things they expect to learn from their experience. “What lives in the creek” and “what pollutes the creek” were the most common responses.

The Beaver Creek Task Force, in conjunction with the Water Quality Forum,

is sponsoring Adults in the Creek. The participating students have pledged to devote one day a week to after-school study through the spring.

Learning what makes for a healthy watershed is a lesson that will enrich their lives and benefit the community they live in. These young people want to make a difference in the health of their environment, and they need adults in the community to join in.

For any who may have forgotten the pleasure of wading in a flowing creek – or for those neglected grownups who never knew the pleasure – this is your chance to have fun, learn and play a part in promoting the health of our creeks and streams. To sign up, call Leah Lemoine at 523-2358.



Jordyn Wilson and Cassie Caldwell sort creek and river specimens with AmeriCorps volunteer Leah Lemoine.



No, that is *not* the appetizer. Just bugs from the creek. Photos by Larry Van Guilder